



RTPI Scotland

mediation of space · making of place

Royal Town Planning Institute Scotland

18 Atholl Crescent
Edinburgh EH3 8HQ
Tel: 0131 229 9628
Fax: 0131 229 9332
Email: scotland@rtpi.org.uk
Website: www.rtpi.org.uk/scotland
Patron HRH The Prince of Wales KG PC GCP

SPP Review Team
Planning and Architecture Division
Scottish Government
Area 2H
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

E-mail to: sppreview@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

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Dear Sir/ Madam

DRAFT SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. We work to promote the art and science of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,200 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of nearly 23,000. We:

- support policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public;
- maintain the professional standards of our members;
- support our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively;
- maintain high standards of planning education;
- develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning;
- support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland; and
- improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.

The Institute is grateful for the opportunity to comment on this consultation, and I attach the Respondent Information Form accordingly. We would like to make some additional comments which are contained in this letter.

CONNECTING NPF3 AND SPP

RTPI Scotland believes that planning has an important role in supporting Scottish Government's ambitions on sustainable development, sustainable economic growth,

engagement, climate change, placemaking and well located new development. We are pleased that Scottish Government is committed to the 3rd National Planning Framework (NPF3) and revised Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and that it recognises the key role they can play and the added value that they can bring.

We welcome the draft documents and the ambitions that they set out. RTPI Scotland is committed to maximising the benefits from NPF3 and SPP. For this to happen we believe that we need to build on the many good things contained in the documents and, in doing this, Scottish Government needs to look to use them, and the other tools they have at their disposal, to provide:

- **certainty** for planning authorities, developers, investors and communities. This requires NPF3 and SPP to:
 - provide a framework to enable delivery by including a delivery focused Action Programme for both documents that links to, and influences decisions on, resources.
 - outline clear policy and geographical priorities that indicate the implications of the documents for specific sectors or areas of Scotland.
 - be thought of as an investment strategy as well as a planning document, that highlights future opportunities and assets that are to be valued.
- **clarity** of ambition. This requires NPF3 and SPP to:
 - clearly set out the high level ambitions they are trying to achieve and planning's role in supporting this.
 - set out the indicators that will be used to monitor progress.
 - include precise and unambiguous wording that is not open to interpretation.
- a **clear hierarchy** for visioning and decision making. This requires Scottish Government to clearly set out, and differentiate between:
 - the policies/ strategy in place to achieve the outcomes they aspire to. These should be the main thrust of NPF3 and SPP.
 - the means of delivering these, which should be contained in the joint Action Programme.
 - guidance on definitions and technical aspects in place to support delivery, which should not be in main body of SPP or NPF3.
- a framework that allows Scottish Government and its Agencies, planning authorities and those engaging with the planning system to **work more smartly**. This requires:
 - NPF3 and SPP to work towards achieving the same outcomes and to work to the same timescales. SPP should outline how these will be achieved and NPF3 should set out where they will happen. Both documents should be looking to a 20 -30 year timescale, should be reviewed at the same time, and, should be published at the same time. Pushing the publication date of SPP back to the same time as NPF3 will allow for the documents to be explicitly linked to one another.

- NPF3 and SPP to provide a context which focusses the work of Scottish Government, Key Agencies and planning authorities on those tasks that add value so as to make best use of limited resources.
- Scottish Government to ensure that NPF3 and SPP are corporate documents that influence other key Government strategies such as, for example, the National Marine Plan, the Infrastructure Investment Plan and the Land Use Strategy.

THE ADDED VALUE OF PLANNING, PLANNERS AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM

RTPI Scotland is pleased that Scottish Government has recognised the important role that planning, planners and the planning system can play in helping it to achieve its objectives, and we welcome the demonstration of this commitment through the publication of the draft Scottish Planning Policy (SPP).

We commend Scottish Government for entering into wide ranging and in-depth engagement with the planning profession on the development of the document. We have been pleased to support this through holding events with each of Chapters and Scottish Young Planners' Network. These have helped to inform our response. We have also used the RTPI Scotland journal Scottish Planner to stimulate debate on SPP and asked 10 Young Planners to discuss how to achieve a number of outcomes through NPF3 and the revised SPP. You can read this at

http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/560599/scottish_planner_june_13.pdf

PRINCIPLES FOR AN EFFECTIVE SPP

RTPI Scotland has set out 10 principles that we believe should be applied to the document. These are that SPP:

1. is ambitious
2. prioritises
3. integrates
4. is influential
5. is clear and holistic
6. focusses on delivery
7. is based around outcomes
8. is directly linked to the revised Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)
9. provides clarity on where it links with other policy, guidance, advice and good practice.
10. is based on sound evidence and needs to be monitored to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose.

ROLE AND STRUCTURE

Influence

The SPP should be genuinely influential, and support the Scottish Government's aims of planning reform and culture change as the top of the planning policy hierarchy, in leading and guiding the preparation of Strategic and Local Development Plans, and the planning decision making process. The NPF3 should therefore be seen as the key document setting out the "where", with the SPP establishing the "how" and "why", framing all planning policy and decision making. We appreciate the valuable work that has been undertaken by the Minister for Local Government and Planning and Scottish Government officials to raise the profile of planning and national planning policy. As with

NPF3, SPP must also be cross cutting and embedded within all aspects of Scottish Government activity that have spatial implications.

RTPI Scotland has welcomed the engagement undertaken by the Minister for Local Government and Planning and his officials with the business community. This is vital if they are to see the SPP as a document that provides certainty and predictability to help their planning and decisions on investment. Current economic circumstances mean that the SPP needs to promote a collaborative approach between public, private and third sector organisations where risk and rewards are shared.

Outcomes

RTPI Scotland is pleased that the draft SPP proposes a more outcome focussed approach to policy in outlining Scottish Government National Outcomes, the Planning Outcomes which relate to these, and the way in which the SPP aims to contribute to these three Planning Outcomes. However, we feel that it is necessary for these outcomes to be the same as those to be adopted for NPF3, with NPF3 setting out 'where' and SPP setting out 'how' and 'why'.

We suggest that the Principal Policies within the draft SPP would be more appropriate as Planning Outcomes, representing the overarching themes that planning seeks to achieve, with subject policies following these key outcomes within the document:

- Sustainable economic growth
- Sustainable development
- Effective engagement
- Reduced climate change
- Quality places
- Well located new development

We also feel that the document could do more to embed the outcomes approach so as to help to demonstrate how the planning system contributes to key priorities and provide a more holistic basis for planning policy in Scotland.

Delivery

RTPI Scotland feels that SPP should be clearly and positively focussed on the delivery of key outcomes set out within the document, and provide the spatial context for delivering specific national targets, framed within a number of national outcomes.

It is encouraging to see that the finalised NPF3 will include an Action Programme along the lines of those in strategic and local development plans. We suggest that SPP should also benefit from an Action Programme which would help to ensure that the document promotes development which is deliverable, and that these could be one and the same thing, in the form of a Joint Action Programme.

There is a need to make the connection between policy set out within the SPP, and resources that can enable these to be delivered. It is vital that both NPF3 and SPP are embedded across Scottish Government and both used as part of the hierarchy of Scottish planning policy documents in the forward planning of Key Agencies, utility companies, investors and communities. It also means that we need to look beyond the planning system as the only tool in delivering development - better linking together

development proposals with resourcing and paving initiatives including Tax Incremental Financing, Compulsory Purchase Orders and Prudential Borrowing to encourage delivery of development on the ground. This will also require a more explicit link between development and infrastructure provision.

Clarity

For the SPP to be truly influential, it must be clear, holistic and user-friendly. RTPI Scotland appreciates the challenge faced by SPP; it must be clear and concise, avoiding being open to endless interpretation, whilst also being flexible to the different users of the document, and to change. As part of the culture change agenda and in order for the SPP to be genuinely influential as part of the planning policy hierarchy down to regional and local planning, it must be clear on what is policy, and how these policies link to delivering national planning outcomes.

Whilst the new draft SPP goes some way from the original SPP in terms of recognising the need for guidance on policy and delivery, we are concerned that this is not articulated as clearly as it could be. As such, we would encourage the Scottish Government to review the structure of the SPP to ensure it is as clear, transparent, and concise as possible. The document should set out a hierarchy with distinct strategy/policies clearly established first, followed by guidance on delivery (monitored as part of the Action Programme), and with the more technical tools and explanations perhaps reserved to an appendix to emphasise and highlight the key policy messages further. The newly published Scottish Government policy statement on Architecture and Place for Scotland "Creating Places" has a very clear structure within its Strategy for Architecture and Place, and part three of the document clearly sets out policy and strategy, followed by explanatory text. SPP should prioritise high level national policy as part of this hierarchy, with detail following on from this.

There may also be opportunities to think more creatively about the format of the document – could it be designed as an online document first, rather than hard copy? If this was done it may allow more scope or introducing video, links to other documentation, case studies etc.

Linkages

We think that there should be a clear statement at the start of the document about its status and the relationship it has with other Scottish Government planning documents including the NPF3; the Architecture and Place Policy for Scotland; Designing Streets; Designing Places; Scottish Historic Environment Policy; Letters issued by the Chief Planner; Circulars; good practice and guidance published by other parts of Government and by Key Agencies.

Evidence Base and Monitoring

RTPI Scotland is of the view that a sound and transparent evidence base must be in place to demonstrate why policy directions and priorities have been taken in the SPP.

We suggest that SPP should be subject to a process of monitoring by way of an Annual Report and, as noted earlier under the section on Delivery, an Action Plan, as will be the case for the NPF3. This could provide a more current idea of trends and enable Scottish Government to assess whether amendments need to be made to the SPP and a timeframe for these. There is also an opportunity to better define the indicators that are

required to monitor NPF3 and SPP, and link these with emerging indicators at the strategic development planning level.

General

In addition to the high level points mentioned above as part of the structure of the SPP document, we also have a number of more general points regarding the wording and layout of the document.

RTPI Scotland advises that care should be taken in the use of the terms “local authority” and “planning authority” within the SPP. We believe that the term “planning authority” refers specifically to the planning function of an authority, and includes the two National Park Authorities, whereas “local authority” brings in all other functions of the authority, including education, transport, and community planning. In addition, the terms “city region” and Strategic Development Plan Authorities (SDPAs) should not be substituted for one another, as city region refers to the area, which may, or may not be part of an SDPA area, defined in legislation as the areas responsible for strategic development planning. Using these terms interchangeably may be misleading.

We consider that illustrations and diagrams should be carefully considered in the context of the overall SPP message, and suggest that there may be a more appropriate way of depicting the information within the diagram on Page 13, for example. Furthermore, could illustrations be included to reinforce key messages within the document?

We question the clarity the use of the colour coding within the SPP document. If this format is to remain, we suggest that rationale behind the colour coding is briefly but clearly set out within the document to avoid confusion, and better understand the document. This may also help to avoid further uncertainty that may arise when the document is printed in black and white by users. We have supported the ‘look and feel’ of the NPF3 document, and suggest that SPP could follow the lead from NPF3 with a similar look to allow clarity and consistency of approach, further linking the documents together.

Whilst we acknowledge the importance placed within the new section on Location of New Development, there is an element of overlap here with Sustainable Economic Growth and Sustainable Development. Could the SPP be structured to be clear and concise, avoiding repetition where possible?

POLICY

General

We welcome the ambitions and opportunities set out the document, and note that much of this is contextualised in current economic circumstances, positioning planning as a positive tool to achieving economic recovery. However, the SPP does not set out a clear timescale for the document. The NPF3 is clearly contextualised within the current economy, but looks to the long term in terms of influence and development. SPP aims to focus plan making, planning decisions and development design on the Scottish Government’s purpose of creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth, without providing a timeline or timescales for its policies. We believe that both NPF3 and SPP can work more smartly, with the same timescales for each document and a clear process of review and

monitoring for each, perhaps both looking over a 20-30 year period with a five yearly review.

We suggest that SPP could be more consistent in terms of the level of detail of policy. While some policies are suitably high level, with detail left to the discretion of the planning authority, other policies are very detailed and overly prescriptive. There are several instances of this within the SPP. We suggest that the SPP could be further streamlined by removing over-specific detail and, as mentioned earlier in this response, following a hierarchy whereby policy is clearly set out, followed by delivery mechanisms, and with technical information and guidance placed in an appendix, or as a Planning Advice Note.

A key point that should be given more prominence in the document is that successful and sustainable development it is often about making the best use of the assets and infrastructure that are already in place, rather than building new things.

Sustainable Economic Growth

RTPI Scotland recognises that Sustainable Economic Growth is the central purpose of the Scottish Government, and we support the concept of Sustainable Economic Growth as a key policy within SPP, as long as growth is sustainable, as it shows the importance of planning as a driver for economic recovery.

However, the SPP should be clearer on how Sustainable Economic Growth is positioned in relation to Sustainable Development, as this is very much open to interpretation in the draft document. The draft SPP separates Sustainable Economic Growth and Sustainable Development, with the perception of Sustainable Economic Growth sitting above and ahead of Sustainable Development, as first on the list of Principal Policies.

Sustainable Development has a clear definition within SPP in terms of the UK's shared framework, and there is a statutory duty on Development Plans to be prepared with an objective of contributing to Sustainable Development, set out within the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. We welcome the Scottish Government's continued commitment to this in the SPP. It therefore follows that, since we have a plan-led system, that development should be sustainable, unless material considerations state otherwise. We suggest that Sustainable Economic Growth is a consequence of Sustainable Development and both should be considered within the same section, with a clearer definition of Sustainable Economic Growth provided.

Placemaking

We welcome the greater emphasis within the draft SPP on placemaking as a key policy consideration, and support its inclusion within the document; however, we are concerned that this features as a standalone section, rather than as a theme threaded throughout the document and integral to all policy. The existing chapter on placemaking divorces the concept from the rest of the document. As previously noted, if placemaking was to become an outcome for SPP, this would work to embed the principles throughout the document as an overarching theme.

Place is inherently about bringing things together, joining-up and integrating. Therefore, we also suggest that the methodology proposed in terms of colour coding for the SPP and the placemaking section further separates and breaks down the chapter. The colour coding divides a central unifying concept of Place into four themes, which runs counter

to promoting an holistic view about positively making integrated places for people's needs.

If the SPP is to replace Designing Places as the principal placemaking policy and guidance, we question whether there is enough substance within this section to truly guide and influence design and the creation of place on the ground. The section on placemaking could go further to talk about 'change' in terms of growth, transforming, adaption, management; enabling and empowering people to take forward a community based vision; or consider how services are delivered and how people live their lives; and issues of governance and stewardship. This could perhaps be included as part of a Planning Advice Note or other technical guidance, rather than as part of the policy itself within SPP.

Housing

It is important for planning at a national level to set robust policy in place to deliver housing for all of Scotland. We see SPP as an important driver for positive planning policies which will deliver development on the ground, and we support the level of 20% as the upper limit defined for a "generous supply of housing".

We note that the term "brownfield" has been replaced in the SPP with "previously developed land". We suggest that clarity on the definition of "previously developed land" could provide more certainty, with perhaps this term being added to the Glossary. In addition, we welcome the bullet point within Paragraphs 27 and 37, encouraging reuse of previously developed land, and again in Paragraph 43, promoting regeneration and use of previously developed land before development of greenfield sites, but we are concerned that this key message is lost within the document, peppered throughout the text. This should be articulated more clearly in the document.

Town Centres

RTPI Scotland supports the "town centre first" presumption, extending the requirement for sequential testing beyond only retail to all footfall-creating uses within town centres, to support Scotland's town centres to flourish. It is encouraging to see this principle carried over from the recently published National Review of Town Centres. Critical to the success of the "town centre first" presumption will be commitment from planning authorities, Community Planning Partnerships and local authorities to implement and enforce the policy. Our response to the newly published Town Centre Advisory Group Report can be found at http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/563247/briefing_-_town_centre_review_-_july_2013.pdf. This is also relevant to SPP.

Onshore Renewables

We welcome the approach whereby the SPP sets out groupings for onshore wind within Local Development Plans, as this should lead to a clear picture for all interested parties of where onshore wind developments will be acceptable in planning terms.

We think that this section of SPP could give more clarity, for example in defining what a "wind farm" is. Policy relating to single turbines should be distinguished from that of wind farms, and a level should be explicitly set as a definition to explain and characterise a "wind farm" to give certainty and clarity to the policy.

Within Paragraph 218 of the SPP setting out guidance for spatial frameworks for onshore wind, the map showing core areas of wild land published by Scottish Natural

Heritage is referred to. Has this been subject to consultation, and if not, is it intended to do this?

RTPI Scotland published a Briefing Note entitled "Meeting the 2020 Renewable Energy Targets: Is Planning Part of the Solution?" http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/12465/briefing_-_2020_renewables_target_-_28_june_2012.pdf. This is also relevant to SPP. http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/12465/briefing_-_2020_renewables_target_-_28_june_2012.pdf

Marine Planning

We are concerned that the integration of marine and terrestrial planning does not come across strongly or clearly enough within the draft SPP. Passing references within Paragraphs 74, and 182, and the inclusion of the National Marine Plan as a 'Key Document' in the Aquaculture section before Paragraph 182 does not provide a coherent message of the importance of a clear link between the National Marine Plan, and future Regional Marine Plans, and terrestrial planning, and in particular the SPP. It is not helpful that the draft National Marine Plan was not published alongside the draft SPP.

Whilst we support the message within Paragraph 74 that the "*planning system should support a holistic approach to coastal planning by working closely with neighbouring authorities and Marine Planning Partnerships to ensure development plans and marine regional plans are complementary*", it should be noted that it will take some time for Regional Marine Plans to be put in place, and in particular, for Marine Planning Partnerships to be set up, and Marine Scotland currently has a plan to pilot one or two of these initially, before rolling out across Scotland. Therefore consistency of approach should be taken between these new Marine Planning Partnerships and the Regional Marine Plans when they come into force, and in the meantime, the Scottish Government Planning and Architecture Division, and Marine Planning should confer, sharing ideas and practice.

It is at this national level that NPF3, SPP and the National Marine Plan should integrate policy, recognising not only the natural environment link between Scotland's coastline and its marine environment, but also the key link between the location of offshore renewables developments and their onshore implications in terms of substations, grid connections, and landscape and visual impact.

'Unconventional' Gas

RTPI Scotland remains to be convinced of the benefits of 'unconventional' gas, and we feel that this requires further evidence before the decision is made to enshrine this technology within national planning policy.

Paragraph 2.54 of NPF3 states "*Finally, as noted in the draft Scottish Planning Policy, there are emerging opportunities to utilise our onshore reserves of 'unconventional' gas, such as shale gas and coal bed methane, in ways which are compatible with the protection of the environment.*". However, within the text of SPP, there is no mention of 'unconventional' gas at all. We suggest that this inconsistency is picked up in the redrafting process of SPP and NPF3 and that reference to 'unconventional' gas is removed from both documents until a more robust evidence base has been found.

Engagement

Whilst we welcome the prominence of engagement as a principal policy within the SPP, we suggest that this should be more aspirational, encouraging more than the statutory minimum engagement. Perhaps Planning Aid for Scotland's SP=EED document could be referred to within the SPP, promoting effective engagement tools for all users of the planning system.

Community Planning

Despite Paragraph 10 stating that "*greater integration between land use planning and community planning is crucial...*", we feel that there should be more emphasis of the link between community planning and land use planning throughout the document, not only within this introductory paragraph, with the encouraging of this relationship embedded within the SPP. Land use planning should be working to support Community Planning objectives, as part of a commitment to connecting planning outcomes with wider local authority outcomes, and as an important part of achieving local authority Single Outcome Agreements, and the SPP should give direction to Planning Authorities on how they should engage with Community Planning Partnerships.

I trust that you will find these comments helpful. If you would like to discuss any aspect, or require clarification of any points raised, please contact me on 0131 229 9628 or by email to craig.mclaren@rtpi.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'Craig McLaren', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig McLaren
National Director